United Nations

Daily Highlights

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General urges Security Council to take "whatever measures" to ensure safe and immediate return of Palestinians expelled by Israel to southern Lebanon last month.

+ United Nations Verification Mission in Angola would confine its deployment to Luanda for now, with capability of providing support for peace-keeping efforts by his Special Representative, if necessary, according to report by Secretary-General.

+ President of Angola asks for urgent Council meeting to discuss "involvement of South African Army in military action against Angolan people".

+ In first of two consecutive meetings last night, Security Council demands end to Croatian attacks on UNPROFOR and calls for immediate return of weapons seized by Serbs.

+ Security Council, in second meeting, warns all parties in Bosnia and Herzegovina of "serious consequences" if humanitarian aid continues to be impeded.

+ In Cambodia, with less than a week before end of voter registration, over 4.5 million Cambodians have registered to vote.

+ Elections held in Haiti on 18 January, as well as those planned for yesterday, were "not free and fair", according to statement by European Community.

+ Committee to combat desertification begins four-day session at Headquarters to discuss measures aimed at arresting growing threat of desertification affecting some 100 countries.

+ Economic and Social Council elects Juan O. Somavia, Chile's Permanent Representative to United Nations, as President for 1993; Council session to set up high-level Commission on Sustainable Development.

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+ International Conference on Convention on Biodiversity opened today in Nairobi by new Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme, Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

+ Nadia Younes appointed Director of United Nations Information Centre in Rome.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended to the Security Council that it take "whatever measures" to ensure the safe and immediate return of the some 400 Palestinians expelled by Israel to southern Lebanon last month, saying that "he would be failing in his duty" if he did not make that recommendation.

In his report to the Council, dated 25 January, the Secretary-General warned that there was "a growing perception, throughout the international community" that the Council, by not pressing for Israel's compliance with resolution 799 (1992) and all other relevant resolutions, "does not attach equal importance to the implementation of all of its decisions".

The report comes after the return to Headquarters of Under-Secretary-General Chinmaya Gharekhan, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser and Representative to the multilateral peace talks on the Middle East, who, during two recent missions, held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

According to the report, the Secretary-General intends to initiate discussions with the Israeli authorities regarding the establishment of a United Nations monitoring mechanism in the occupied territories in order to reassure the Palestinians under Israeli occupation that the international community is not neglecting their need for safety and protection.

The Israeli deportation of Palestinians last year, the Secretary-General writes, was "only the most recent in a series of violations by Israel" of the 1949 Geneva Convention on the protection of civilians in time of war. The ongoing volatility of the situation in the occupied territories, it says, remains a matter of deep concern for the international community.

The Israeli High Court of Justice began on 17 January 1993 its consideration of an appeal which challenges the legality of the Government's action in "temporarily expelling" the Palestinians. At the time of the issuing of the report, the Court hearings were continuing.
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In a report containing long-term assessments of the United Nations further role in the peace process in Angola, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the United Nations Verification Mission in that country (UNAVEM II) confine its deployment to Luanda for now, but with

the capability to provide support the peace-keeping efforts of Margaret Ansteee, his Special Representative, if necessary. The recommendation - favored by the Secretary-General - is one of three options presented in his report to the Security Council, dated 21 January.

According to the report, this option, if accepted by the Council, would require the deployment of 30 military observers, six police observers and 28 international civilian staff. Under the proposal, a 30 April deadline would be set by the Council for a cease-fire agreement between by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) and the Government of Angola and the resumption of negotiations within the framework of the Peace Accords. Failing such an agreement, UNAVEM II would be withdrawn.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali notes in his report that the fundamental cause of the breakdown of the peace process in Angola was the failure, "often deliberate", of both parties to implement in full the provisions of the Peace Accords relating to political, military and police matters or to make the necessary efforts to promote national reconciliation.

With regard to its future role in Angola, the Secretary-General urges that the United Nations remain more closely involved in the negotiations on the completion of the peace process than it did in the case of the Peace Accords of May 1991. Otherwise, the Organization might again find itself being given responsibilities which do not match the complexities of the task or which it cannot in practice discharge, he says.
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In a related development, the President of Angola, Jose Eduardo dos Santos, President of Angola, has asked for an urgent meeting of the Council to discuss the situation in his country, in the light of "the involvement of the South African Army in military action against the Angolan people and their elected Government, together with the UNITA forces". He also reports the presence of Zairean soldiers and "mercenaries of different nationalities", who are combating alongside UNITA against the Government forces, "thus creating a new and dangerous side to the conflict".

The request was transmitted to the Secretary-General in a letter, signed by the Angolan Ambassador to the United Nations, Afonso Van-Dunem "Mbinda".

The Security Council is scheduled to hold consultations on the situation in Angola tomorrow afternoon.

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The Security Council, in the first of two consecutive meetings last night, demanded that the Croatian armed forces in or adjacent to the United Nations protected areas immediately cease their hostile activities and

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withdraw from those areas. The Council also demanded that the Serb local authorities in Croatia return to the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) the heavy weapons removed from UNPROFOR-controlled storage areas.

The Council meeting was held at the request of France, following reports that two French peace-keepers serving with UNPROFOR in Croatia had been killed. The Council had deplored on Friday, 22 January, in a President statement, the Croatian offensive against local Serbian forces and urged the Croatian forces to withdraw to positions held before the offensive.

Under last night's unanimous resolution, the Council further demanded that all parties concerned comply strictly with agreed cease-fire arrangements and that they respect fully the safety of United Nations personnel. The Council also called on all parties concerned to cooperate fully and unconditionally in disbanding and demobilization of Serb Territorial Defence units or other similar units, under the United Nations peace-keeping plan

The French Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Jean-Bernard Mérimée, said his country had spared no effort in trying to bring peace to former Yugoslavia. As a result, 11 French soldiers had died while serving with UNPROFOR. He urged the Council to call on all parties to ensure the safety of UNPROFOR personnel -- a basic obligation that was too often ignored by parties to a conflict.

The Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Yuliy M. Vorontsov, condemning the Croatian attack, said the Croatian army was seeking to extend the areas of hostilities, and might face sanctions similar to those which had been imposed on Serbia.

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The Security Council has warned the parties to the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina of "serious consequences" if the delivery of humanitarian relief assistance continued to be impeded. The warning came in a Presidential statement read out by Council President Yoshio Hatano (Japan) at a second Council meeting last night.

By the statement, the Council reaffirmed its demand that all parties and others concerned, in particular Serb paramilitary units, "cease and desist forthwith from all violations of international humanitarian law" being committed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly the deliberate interference with humanitarian convoys.

The Council further invited the Secretary-General to keep under continuous review the possibility of air-dropping humanitarian assistance to areas isolated by the conflict.

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In Cambodia, with less than a week to go before the end of voter registration on 31 January, over 4.5 million Cambodians have registered to

vote. According to a spokesman for the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) over 3.8 million registrants had been entered into the Electoral Component's computer as of yesterday.

With regard to mine clearing activities, the spokesman said nearly seven thousand mines had already been cleared from over a million square metres of land. In addition, almost four thousand unexploded ordnance had been destroyed, he said.

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The elections held in Haiti on 18 January, as well as those planned for yesterday, were not a valid expression of the democratic will of the people of that country, according to the European Community (EC).

In a statement transmitted to the Secretary-General by the Permanent Representative of Denmark to the United Nations, Bent Haakonsen, the EC said the elections were "not free and fair since the necessary preconditions, notably freedom of expression and the right to an open political dialogue, did not exist in Haiti".

The statement went on to say that the EC had consistently reaffirmed their commitment to the restoration of the democratic and constitutional Government in Haiti, as well as their will to support all efforts conducive to a settlement of the Haitian crisis. It welcomed the efforts by the Organization of American States (OAU) and the United Nations to bring about the restoration of democracy in Haiti and urged all parties concerned to work towards that end.

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A United Nations Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to combat desertification began its four-day organizational session at Headquarters today.

The session is expected to elaborate measures in a global effort to arrest the growing threat of desertification affecting some 100 countries and about one-sixth of the world's population. The establishment of the Committee was recommended by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held last summer in Brazil.

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The Economic and Social Council, at its first organizational meeting at Headquarters today, set up its Bureau and elected Juan O. Somavia, Permanent Representative of Chile to the United Nations, as President of the Council for 1993.

In an opening statement, Mr. Somavia said the task of making the Council an important instrument was not a responsibility which could be divided along the lines of North and South. It must be carried out collectively.

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During the second part of its organizational session, to be held from 2 to 5 February, the Council, as requested by the General Assembly, will set up the Commission on Sustainable Development, which will be the main United Nations body in charge of the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

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The International Conference on the Convention on Biodiversity was opened today in Nairobi by the new Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNED), Elizabeth Dowdeswell.

Some 100 participants from 21 countries and international and national organizations are attending the event which is expected to provide advice both on the Convention's implementation and on the elaboration of possible additional protocols.

The Framework Convention on the Conservation of Biological Diversity was opened for signature at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro in June last year. The document will enter into force when 30 countries have ratified it. As of last week, 160 countries had signed the Convention and six had ratified it.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has appointed Nadia Younes as Director of the United Nations Information Centre in Rome. She succeeds Vincent Piola who is being reassigned to the Department of Public Information (DPI) at Headquarters. Mrs. Younes will take up her duties in Rome on 1 February.

A national of Egypt, Ms. Younes joined the United Nations Secretariat in 1970. Most recently, she served as Deputy Spokeswoman in the Office of the Spokesman for the Secretary-General, a post she held since March 1988.

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